OCCASIONAL THOUGHTS ON THE DEATH OF Mr. THOMAS DAWSON;

(A dear and much-lamented FRIEND)

Who died on SUNDAY, Nov. 15, 1772.

By a FRIEND.

Our dying Friends come o'er us like a Cloud
To damp our brainless Ardors, and abate
That Glare of Life, which often blinds the Wise.
YOUNG, No. 3.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

OCCASIONAL

THOUGHTS, &c.

THE ſolemnities of a dying hour, and the important realities of an eternal world, are things which ſtrike the mind with peculiar awe. If we view the remains of a dear departed friend—how nature ſhudders at the ſight! We can ſcarce glance, or think upon the once beloved object of our heart, than every feeling of the human breaſt is awakened, and every generous ſentiment raiſed, that can either excite compaſſion, or command reſpect. We feel for the *living* and the *dead*: though it may be thought vain reſpecting the latter, yet ſuch is the temper, ſuch the diſpoſition, of a generous mind, fraught with diſintereſted benevolence, that it cannot avoid diſcovering a deep heart-affecting concern even reſpecting the dead, particularly if while living, a generous friendſhip ſubſiſted. If it would not appear too great a proof of egotiſm in me, I would mention my own experience as a confirmation of this. Nor do any feel particularly for the loſs of a friend, but thoſe whoſe hearts are in ſome meaſure ſuſceptible of impreſſions of this nature, and who were reciprocally united in the bonds of undiminiſhed friendſhip. In this caſe, no language can ſufficiently expreſs what paſſes in the mind. Every pleaſing hour, ſpent in the warmth of joyful friendſhip, recollected, adds additional concern. A recollection of paſt circumſtances in life, in which the integrity of the friend, the amiable ſincerity of the chriſtian, and the politeneſs of the gentleman, were happily

 mingled,

mingled, ſerve only to diſtreſs the mind: in how great a degree, I cannot ſay—The heart alone can tell;—and tell it has—tell it muſt—tell it will—for the memory of the dear man, whoſe death is the occaſion of theſe lines. Ah, lovely youth! cut down in the prime of life, and all his fair bloſſoms of earthly happineſs blighted in a moment. *Sudden* was the call, and *almoſt unexpected* the departure. But a few weeks, or rather days before, our beloved friend was baſking in the ſmiles of fortune, and partaking the joys of connubial bliſs;—but now torn from them! Methinks I ſee him—ah, no!—the pleaſing ſight is vaniſhed; and that pulſe, which then beat, now beats no more—That tongue, which oft has been uſed for the moſt benevolent of purpoſes, is now locked in ſilence—Thoſe eyes, which were wont piercingly to view the partner of his boſom, and the friend of his heart, are for ever cloſed—Thoſe ears, which have been open to the voice of melody, are for ever ſtopped, and *all* that was once pleaſing, lovely, and inviting, is now no more. The immortal inhabitant is fled, and nought remains but putrefaction. Eſcorted by angels, the uncorrupted and immortal part is bathing in the font of bliſs, and baſking in the ſmiles of a reconciled God. The everlaſting Jeſus welcomes the dear redeemed, ranſomed ſoul, as the purchaſe of his divinely precious blood, and puts palms of eternal victory and joy into his hands. But whilſt the glorified ſpirit is divinely employed in the perfections of celeſtial bliſs, how are the thoughts of ſurviving relatives and friends engaged? Methinks I, in ſome faint meaſure, feel for the wife of his boſom;—but ah! how *faintly* feel! When the moſt generous, ſuſceptible heart is piercingly wounded and broken for the irrepairable loſs of the moſt valuable of huſbands. How will *ſhe* bear *this* ſudden ruſh from life's meridian joys!

This

This wrench from all ſhe lov'd! from all ſhe had!
This ſun extinguiſh'd! this juſt opening grave!
And oh! this laſt, laſt; What? (can words expreſs?
Thought reach?) this laſt, laſt—ſilence of a friend! a *huſband!*

Bear it!—who can tell? It is the work of God, and not of man, to ſupport under ſo affecting a trial. And ſure I am, I feel a ſenſation which deep and poignant concern alone can produce. The ſurviving *relatives* lament the loſs of a valuable relation—the *mournful widow*, the heart-affecting loſs of (inſupportable thought!) a husband! *Friends*, heart-united friends, (myſelf among the reſt) lament the loſs of a friend, rendered truly dear, and truly valuable to them, by the moſt endearing ties of *friend* and *brother*. But I can no more. The Lord *gave*, and the Lord *hath* taken away—and, O that every heart could add,—Bleſſed be the name of the Lord. This was the ſtrong faith of a patriarch, but it is now the privilege of few. There is indeed a peculiar beauty in the words, as ſpoken by holy Job;—and happy and highly favoured is the man or woman, who can adopt them with the ſame degree of faith. The Lord gave—here every voice acquieſces, and every heart acknowledges, that dignity, power and majeſty of God, the words are ſuited to convey. And the Lord *hath* taken away—here too there is a univerſal acquieſcence: I would God I could ſay ſo reſpecting the latter clauſe—ſay it with believing reſignation; and, with the humble confidence of a ſoul devoted to God, add, Bleſſed be the name of the Lord. This is the language of a heart powerfully wrought upon by the ſovereignty of divine grace; and brought into ſubjection to the will of God, ſo as chearfully to acquieſce in every diſpenſation, whether proſperous or adverſe. The Lord indeed raiſeth up, and bringeth low. Every event, however inconſiſtent with the ideas of men, is made to terminate ultimately in the glory of God. God is ever on his

way,

way, and perfecting his work in judgment, righteouſneſs, and mercy. He is either calling, by his grace, to a ſaving knowledge of Jeſus, in time; or taking his dear children from the evil of the world, to live and enjoy him in the fulneſs of glory and everlaſting perfection, in eternity. Every believer, therefore, *ſhould ſay* (though few do), under every diſpenſation, however trying and afflictive—It is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good. It is obſervable, that the Lord never afflicts but for very wiſe ends, and in order to bring about ſomething which is peculiarly advantageous to the perſon afflicted. Hence, therefore, if God afflicts the peculiar objects of his love, he graciouſly affords them ſtrong conſolations; conſolations ſuited to the greatneſs of their ſufferings, and adequate to the extreme fulneſs of their grief. He is an *impregnable fortreſs*, a *ſtrong tower*, and *rock of defence*, as well as the comfort and joy of his people. Are they expoſed to danger? The arm of omnipotence is engaged to preſerve them. Are they ſinful and polluted in themſelves? The blood of the Lamb is provided as a ſovereign cure; and the righteouſneſs of the everlaſting Jeſus, as ſufficient to juſtify them before God. Are they diſtreſſed by corrupt ſuggeſtions from within, and manifold trials and temptations from without? The comforting influences of the eternal Spirit are afforded them, in order to chear their hearts, and rejoice their ſouls, before God. In every ſtate there is a peculiar bleſſing; and the goodneſs and grace of God will ever be manifeſted to his people. It is this which ſweetens every bitter, ſoothes every corroding pain, and into the cup of grief infuſes drops of joy. Theſe are conſiderations, I preſume, which ſhould particularly engage the attention of every diſtreſſed and humble follower of Jeſus: and it is the wiſh of my heart, that they may be made abundantly uſeful to the dear relatives of my deceaſed friend.

As I have mentioned the *Relatives*, I will now take the liberty more immediately to addreſs myſelf to them:—You have loſt a valuable relation—but remember, your loſs may be abundantly made up in God. It is acknowledged, the heart of a ſurviving widow muſt be filled with grief: but, nevertheleſs, there *ſtill remaineth* cauſe for joy. He is not dead, but *ſleepeth*—ſleepeth in the arms of Jeſus, and is happy in the embraces of his God. He is taken, at an early period, from a world of fruitleſs labour, vanity and vexation; freed from a body of ſin, and called to dwell with his Friend—his Redeemer—his Father—and his God! It is true, *you feel* the want of him, and with tears lament his abſence; but would you, on that account, wiſh his return? Sure I am you would not. Your affliction (I ſpeak as a man) is great: but it might have been ſtill greater. By this affliction, God intends to try your faith and patience; and when tried in the furnace of affliction, you ſhall, according to the divine promiſe, come out as gold tried and purified ſeven times in the fire. It is neceſſary to remember, that as Chriſt is the ſpiritual huſbandman of his church, he muſt, he will conſequently throughly purge his floor, every one of his dear children, from all their droſs and tin;—lead them gently on by the ſtill waters of comfort, and feed them in the green paſtures of his love, 'till he brings them ſafe into the garner of heaven, the Canaan of everlaſting reſt. Learn, therefore, to kiſs the afflictive rod—bow with reverence—be ſtill, and know that it is God who tries you by this affecting providence. Submit to him with devoted chearfulneſs, and, with the temper of obedient children, acknowledge the juſtneſs of a father's correcting hand; ever remembering, that if *he* corrects, it is in love. Doubt not but he will mingle comfort with your affliction, and be unto you the widow's portion, and the widow's God. This God ſhall abundantly ſup-

ply

ply all your wants. Look to him, therefore, and live upon him, as your wiſdom, your ſtrength, your happineſs, your joy, your portion, your God, and your everlaſting All. Depend upon the veracity of his word, that in *ſix troubles* he will be with you, and that in *ſeven*, or *ſeventy-times ſeven*, he will not forſake you. Your ſtrength lies in the *munition of rocks*, and under the protection of an omnipotent arm you will be ſafe from every danger. Grieve not, therefore, or repine at the preſent diſpenſation. Look unto Jeſus; a ſight of him, and a believing application unto him, will ſerve greatly to make your afflictions heavenly and ſpiritual; and you will from thence be led to reſemble Chriſt in his reſignation to the will of providence. Sorrow not as thoſe who have no hope, ſince you have the nobleſt ſource of joy, and the grandeſt theme of praiſe: Rather ſay, with the devoted prophet, "Although the fig-tree "ſhall not bloſſom, neither ſhall fruit be in the "vine; the labour of the olives ſhall fail, and the "fields ſhall yield no meat; the flock ſhall be cut "off from the fold, and there ſhall be no herd in "the ſtalls:—yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will "joy in the God of my ſalvation." Though I ſhould be deprived of every bleſſing, and left deſtitute of the ſmalleſt comfort; though God ſhould ſmite me in every part, and take away from me my choiceſt goods;—though he ſhould viſit me with the ſtricteſt judgments, and at one affecting blow cut off from my boſom the joy of my heart, the delight, the ſtay, the ſtrength, the ſupport, and comfort of my life; yet, or nevertheleſs, I will *rejoice* in the Lord.—Look forward, with exulting joy, to that bleſſed period, when, in the fulleſt and ſublimeſt ſenſe, that divinely precious and conſolatory promiſe ſhall be fulfilled, that "the tabernacle of God is with men, and "he will dwell with them; and they ſhall be his "people; and God himſelf ſhall be with them, and "be their God. And God ſhall wipe away all tears

"from

" from their eyes; and there ſhall be no more " death, neither ſorrow, nor crying; neither ſhall " there be any more pain: for the former things " are paſſed away."——View the eternal Son of the Father, whoſe cradle was a manger, and whoſe ſofteſt bed was hay; when there was no room in the inn for the meek Lamb of God, and when the Lord of life and glory had not where to lay his head! Attend this majeſtic ſufferer ſtill farther, and behold an ennobled throng of angels ſurrounding the incarnate God, when he lay weltering in his blood, in the garden of Gethſemane:---And had I an angel's tongue, I would tell you, in the loudeſt accents, the inconceivable anguiſh of his ſoul, when he uttered that pathetic and overwhelming exclamation, " My " God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?" Celeſtial ſpirits caught the diſmal accents, and reechoed back, The eternal Jeſus forſaken of God! Conſider but a moment, my dear friend, the unparallelled ſufferings of this divine Saviour, for us men, and for our ſalvation; and that it was done with inconceivable chearfulneſs;---and then ſay, Is it meet that I ſhould mourn?---rather let my voice be tuned to the loudeſt notes of praiſe, and my heart engaged in the nobleſt theme of joy. Reflect, with pleaſing comfort, on the unſpeakable benefits which flow in rich abundance from the bleeding agonies of an expiring God. *Benefits*, than which nothing can be greater---than which nothing can be more inconceivably free. Depend upon the veracity of this God-Man, to perform all things for you. In him, as in an overflowing fountain, you have every thing you want. He will be your preſent peace, and your future everlaſting joy.

I will now leave with you, the moſt remarkable and aſtoniſhing inſtance of *human* reſignation I ever remember to have met with, which is to be found in the conduct of the exemplary Archbiſhop *Fenelon*.

When his illuſtrious and hopeful pupil (the Duke of *Burgundy*, if I miſtake not) lay dead in his coffin, and the nobles of his court, in all the pomp of ſilent ſadneſs, ſtood weeping round, the Archbiſhop came into the apartment; and having fixed his eyes, for ſome time, on the corpſe, broke out at length in terms to this effect: "There lies my beloved "Prince! for whom my affection was equal to the "tendereſt regard of the tendereſt parent. Nor "was my affection loſt: he loved me, in return, "with the ardor of a ſon. There he lies, and *all* "my *worldly* happineſs lies dead with Him! BUT "if the *turning of a ſtraw* would call him back to "*life*, I would not, for ten thouſand worlds, be the "turner of that ſtraw, in oppoſition to the will of "God." Such was the reſignation of that great man! May God help others to go and do likewiſe.

But I muſt not diſmiſs the ſubject;—there are perſons into whoſe hands this paper may fall, that I would wiſh particularly to addreſs, and on whom I would enforce the importance of this ſolemn providence. I mean young perſons. I know it is a common caſe with ſuch, that they build for length of days, and think themſelves of too much importance to attend to things of everlaſting conſequence. They vainly flatter themſelves they ſhall live long, becauſe they are in the bloom, and flouriſhing in the gaiety of life. But the preceding pages preſent them with a ſolemn memento to the contrary. Remember, Sirs, that the deceaſed was, a few weeks ago, in all the prime of youthful vigour, and bid as fare for length of days as you. But, behold! in the very meridian of [illegible], he is cut down, and numbered with the dead! Boaſt no more, therefore, of to-morrow, ſince you know not what a day may bring forth. Remember, that this ſolemn providence ſpeaks to you. Hear its kind voice. Liſten to yonder tomb! Be ye alſo ready. Let the gay and the thoughtleſs

thoughtleſs reflect a moment (if they can bear reflection) and conſider whither they are going. Eternity is at hand,—but they conſider not its importance. For God's ſake, Sirs, and as you regard, in the ſmalleſt degree, the welfare of your immortal ſouls, conſider the nature of your preſent purſuits, and what will be the unavoidable conſequence. Remember, there is but a ſtep between you and death—and, that this year you may die. But are you prepared for ſuch an hour? You know you are not; and that if death ſhould ſurpriſe you in your ſins, you would find yourſelves in a miſerable condition. You may now trifle and ſport with every thing which is ſerious and ſacred; but I will be free to tell you, that you do it at the peril of your ſouls. I am perſuaded there are ſome certain ſeaſons, when your conſciences tell you, that your preſent purſuits are injurious to your ſouls. But you are, nevertheleſs, determinately bent to ſtifle conſcience, and ſilence its friendly admonitions. Oh! ſuffer it to ſpeak. It will ſpeak, ere long,—your leave unaſk'd. The time is haſtening, when you muſt appear before the bar of God;—judge you the ſtate of your appearance. Be admoniſhed by the following affecting ſtory of a gentleman, who lay ill of a fever, and in the laſt article of death.—In that awful period, he was affectingly ſtruck with a ſenſe of the danger of his ſtate. He had formerly lived in all the gaiety of life, and indulged himſelf in the enjoyment of every evil, that tended, either to gratify his ſordid paſſions, or inflame his vicious and perverſe inclinations. In his laſt moments, his conſcience was alarmed, and, in the anguiſh of his heart, he cried out with ſtrong importunity, "A thouſand worlds that I could live "one hour longer!" His requeſt was granted; he lived that hour, but ſlept the whole of it; and juſt as it expired, he awoke, and in the bitterneſs of his ſoul cried out, "Ten thouſand times ten thouſand worlds "for one hour—for one moment longer!" and immediately

mediately entered into an awful eternity.——Learn from this, O ye ſons of indulgence and vanity, the extreme danger which attends your every ſenſual enjoyment, and the deep and poignant anguiſh that will enſue in a dying hour, if you, obſtinately continue, daringly to ſin againſt that God, whoſe almighty power is able to plunge you into eternal perdition in a moment.

Once more and I have done. This paper may probably fall into the hands of thoſe whom I particularly eſteem, and for whom I am particularly concerned. They are perſons who have frequent ſtrong convictions of the danger and ſinfulneſs of their ſtate; and are ſo far affected as to ſhed tears. Perhaps a ſtriking ſermon, or a word ſpoken in ſeaſon, has been the occaſion—but anon they have forgotten the employment, and the impreſſion, through company and diverſion, has worn off.—I would beg ſuch to remember, that a ſolemn day of accounts is at hand; and that theſe repeated warnings and admonitions they have, will not always continue. But a little time, and no more of theſe ſolemn mementos.—There have been, and ſtill continue, many of their unhappy caſt. I will mention one inſtance among the reſt, and a remarkable one indeed, it is reſpecting a perſon who is now no more. The perſon referred to was a Gentleman, of an affluent fortune, and who had frequently made a profeſſion of religion; nor was he intirely deſtitute of a knowledge of the goſpel. He was a man of good underſtanding, and able to inveſtigate the peculiar doctrines of the goſpel, in theory, in an extenſive degree. He often diſcovered a ſeeming reliſh, reverence and regard, both for the goſpel and its miniſters. One of theſe miniſters he particularly eſteemed, and invited him to his houſe. The invitation was accepted, and he payed him a viſit. On the ſabbath he preached, and the Gentleman attended.

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In the beginning of the diſcourſe, he ſeemed much affected.—His diſtreſs increaſed, and before the ſermon was finiſhed, he appeared in a manner bathed in tears. When he returned home, he retired in the extremity of his grief, and under the weight of ſtrong convictions, to ſpeak to the miniſter, whom he addreſſed in words to this effect. ——— Sir, ſaid he, did you not intend the diſcourſe this afternoon, for me? Had you not a particular view to me, in preaching?—The miniſter replied, Sir, I neither had directly, nor indirectly, a view to you, when I entered the pulpit, and began my ſermon; but as I obſerved you affected under it, I thought it my duty to follow cloſe home what God had ſeemingly begun. The Gentleman then was in a more particular manner diſtreſſed, wrung his hands, and cried, and ſaid, O Sir, what muſt I do? Can you direct me? Can you aſſiſt me? I have ſinned, continued he, in ſuch an awful manner, that certainly there can be no hopes of pardon and forgiveneſs for me. —The miniſter, ſtruck with a view of ſeeming deep concern, and heart-affecting diſtreſs, began to addreſs him in the gentle terms of the goſpel, and recommended Chriſt Jeſus to him, as the ſinner's only friend. The Gentleman replied, O Sir, theſe things are all nothing to me: I have ſinned away my day of grace, and there cannot,—O Sir, there cannot be any mercy, any forgiveneſs for me! He then appeared almoſt inconſolable, and paſt the poſſibility of receiving comfort from any conſiderations, however comfortable and encouraging, that were offered to him. He continued ſilent for a time, and then called for his ſervant, whom he ordered to bring a glaſs of wine; he drank it:—preſently after he called for a ſecond, which he drank:—He ſat a few minutes longer, and then called for a glaſs of brandy. The miniſter, ſtruck with amazement, ſaid, Sir, what do you mean? What are you about? For God's ſake, Sir, conſider what you are doing! ——— John! ſays the Gentleman

man to his ſervant, bring me the brandy immediately: which he had no ſooner drank, than he began to revile every thing that was ſerious, and, in the moſt awful manner, to vilify the goſpel, and lampoon all convictions for ſin, as meer cant and deluſion. The miniſter, alarmed and affected with his dreadful language, left him. The Gentleman returned again to his former purſuits, and, in a very ſhort time after, died in all the horrors of a wounded conſcience, and in the moſt awful circumſtances of inconceivable anguiſh and diſtreſs.

Can you think of a circumſtance, Sirs, more affectingly awful?---And I appeal to yourſelves, whether you have not had convictions equally ſtrong, and ſilenced them in a like dreadful manner. I will be free to aſk you, whether you do not experience certain ſeaſons, when you even wiſh yourſelves annihilated, and had rather that you were a dog, than a man? But ſhould I aſk you, what means you make uſe of, in order to ſuppreſs theſe diſagreeable thoughts? I am perſuaded, if you anſwered me faithfully, you would declare that they were ſimilar to thoſe abovementioned. It is true, you are not yet, like that poor unhappy man, cut off from the earth; but you are, as he once was, in a ſtate of uncertainty. I am well aſſured, from the ſeveral inſtances I have been witneſs to myſelf, that you are at times ſubject to ſenſations which are painful beyond conception. Your conſciences tell you expreſly, that you are ſinning againſt light and knowledge, and trampling upon the blood of Jeſus, whom you often put to an open ſhame. But ſhall I aſk you, in what manner you ſatisfy yourſelves. Perhaps, you are flattering yourſelves, that you are the *choſen* of God, and that in his own time he will effectually call you to himſelf.---And it may be the caſe, but at preſent you have no authority for this;---*nor more*, have you any evidence of it. Let me warn you, therefore, of what

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is so fatally dangerous to your souls. If you sin, in order that grace may abound, you are acting a part which you will find to be peculiarly injurious to your souls. You are thereby daring God to punish you in the most awful and tremendous manner. You are, no doubt, acquainted with that striking passage,—"My Spirit shall not always strive with man;" nor less acquainted with its true and genuine meaning. I wish from my heart that you may not give rest unto your souls, till you are brought more attentively to think on the nature of your state. —— Remember the important alternative, saved or damned. *Damned!* the human heart shudders at the very expression, and has every thing dreadful to fear from its awful consequences. --- *Saved!* the joy of the believing heart through time, and the soul's transcendent source of joy through eternity. Everlasting mercy waits to be gracious to you, and injured majesty affectingly complains of your rebellious perverseness.—Jesus speaks in the tenderest terms, and invites in love.—Conscience remonstrates.—Why will you thus, and thus, requite the Lord? A whole assemblage of voices call upon you.—Hear their united cry.—It is the cry of God, angels, and ministers;—of departed saints, and of departed sinners;—of time, death, judgment, eternity, heaven, and hell.—If you continue still unmindful, the eternal consequences will rest upon your own heads.

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POSTSCRIPT.

THE Author of the preceding pages, begs leave to lay before an indulgent public, a *ſecond edition*, and with ſome few corrections as to punctuation, &c. which unavoidably eſcaped his notice before, as they were drawn up in great haſte, and printed off before the neceſſary corrections had been made. The kind reception this little piece, (written in the warmth of friendſhip, and, with impaſſioned concern, for the beſt improvement of a deceaſed Friend's Death) has met with, has not failed to excite pleaſure in the breaſt of the author, whoſe grand aim is the glory of God, and the eternal welfare of immortal ſouls. Reſpecting thoſe, who have condemned the main drift of this performance, as cant, enthuſiaſm, and blaſphemy, I can only ſay, that I pity them from my heart; nor do I wonder at any thing they either ſay or do. I am well aſſured, that the ſubject matter is founded upon the general and grand axiom of the Goſpel; and thoſe, who cenſure, do it from motives of prejudice, ignorance and diſlike of every thing ſerious and ſacred. I offer no apology to ſuch. But I will aſk their candid and diſpaſſionate attention to what may, *probably*, be true, though they are exceedingly averſe to believe, what they cannot deny, how much ſoever they may gainſay. The one grand cauſe is—they are unfaithful to themſelves. They will not ſuffer conſcience to have a fair hearing, but ſuppreſs its every generous and kind admonition, by meaſures peculiarly injurious. Teſtimonies, in abundance, may be produced againſt them; and whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, the conſequences are certain and eternal.

THE END.

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